

Remarks/Arguments

The preceding amendments and following remarks are submitted in response to the Final Official Action of the Examiner mailed September 16, 2003. Claims 1-4, 6-14, and 16-29 remain pending, with claims 26-29 being newly presented. Reconsideration, examination and allowance of all pending claims are respectfully requested.

As a preliminary matter, Applicant submitted an IDS on August 15, 2003. However, an initialed copy of the submitted FORM-1449 was not included with the Final Office Action. *Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner provide an initialed copy of the FORM-1449 submitted on August 15, 2003 in due course.*

In paragraph 2 of the Final Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-4, 6-9, 11-14 and 16-18 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. With respect to claim 1, the Examiner states the use of inclusive and alternative language (e.g. "and/or" must be corrected. The same rejection was made with respect to claim 11.

In response, Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite that the "elongated member ~~and/or the elongated carrier~~ must be at least partially elastically deformed or bent to insert the elongated member into the slot". Newly presented claim 26 is similar to claim 1, but recites that "the elongated carrier must be at least partially elastically deformed or bent to insert the elongated member into the slot". Newly presented claim 27 is also similar to claim 1, but recites that "the elongated member and the elongated carrier must be at least partially elastically deformed or bent to insert the elongated

member into the slot.” In view of the foregoing, claims 1, 26 and 27 are believed to fully comply with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Likewise, claim 11 has been amended to recite that “the elongated member ~~and/or the elongated carrier~~ must be at least partially elastically deformed or bent to insert the elongated member into the slot”. Newly presented claim 28 is similar to claim 11, but recites that “the elongated carrier must be at least partially elastically deformed or bent to insert the elongated member into the slot”. Newly presented claim 29 is also similar to claim 11, but recites that “the elongated member and the elongated carrier must be at least partially elastically deformed or bent to insert the elongated member into the slot”. In view of the foregoing, claims 11, 28 and 29 are believed to fully comply with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

In paragraph 3 of the Final Office Action, the Examiner stated that claims 10 and 19-25 are allowed.

In paragraph 4 of the Final Office Action, the Examiner indicated that claims 1 and 11 would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. As detailed above, claims 1 and 11, as amended, are believed to fully comply with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. As such, claims 1 and 11 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

In paragraph 5 of the Final Office Action, the Examiner indicates that claims 2-4, 6-9, 12-14 and 16-18 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Since claims 1 and 11, as amended, fully comply with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph,

Application No. 10/074,356
Amendment dated September 26, 2003
Reply to Final Office Action dated September 16, 2003

claims 2-4, 6-9, 12-14 and 16-18 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that all pending claims 1-4, 6-14, and 16-29 are in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes it would be beneficial to discuss the application or its examination in any way, please call the undersigned attorney at (612) 359-9348.

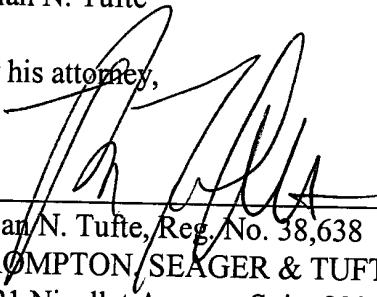
Respectfully submitted,

Brian N. Tufte

By his attorney,

Dated:

SEPTEMBER 26, 2003



Brian N. Tufte, Reg. No. 38,638
CROMPTON, SEAGER & TUFTE, LLC
1221 Nicollet Avenue, Suite 800
Minneapolis, MN 55403-2402
Telephone: (612) 677-9050
Facsimile: (612) 359-9349